



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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CITY COUNCIL

MARCH 5, 2020

REGULAR MEETING - 5:00 PM

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Keith Bennett at 7:00 p.m.

FLAG SALUTE

INVOCATION – Pastor Ed Stump, Past Emeritus Life Point Church, EHT

STATEMENT OF THE SUNSHINE LAW

NOTIFICATION THAT THIS MEETING IS ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Caleb Cavileer, Betty Howell, Steve Light, Frank Phillips, Keith Bennett

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Horton, Fred Scerni, Jessica Thompson, Carie Crone & Ed Dennis

PRESENTATION – Michael Chait from the Greater AC Chamber of Commerce

He talked about the 177th Fighter Wing and their efforts to secure the F35 fighter jet. It's the latest jet the US has to offer; it's a stealth fighter and will replace the F16's that are over 20 years old. He gave some background on them and the base in our area. If we were to receive one of the jets, it would help the economic development in our area. There would be more construction in the area and jobs created. He is requesting that a Resolution be approved welcoming this to our area. Other towns have already done so. The Mayor said that this would also keep that base there.

2020 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

03 An Ordinance of the City of Absecon, to exceed the municipal budget appropriation limits and to establish a cap bank (N.J.S.A. 40A-45.14)

Motion for introduction – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

Jessica – we do this Ordinance every year to maintain the cap bank that exists. We never have exceeded it. It's actually \$500,000 less than what we are allowed to raise.

ROLL CALL: Butch Burroughs, yes; Sandy Cain, yes; Caleb Cavileer, yes; Betty Howell, yes; Steve Light, yes; Frank Phillips, yes; Keith Bennett, yes

2020 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

01 Capital Ordinance appropriating funds for Police Vehicles and Portable Radios within the City of Absecon, County of Atlantic, State of New Jersey.

Motion for second reading – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

ROLL CALL: Butch Burroughs, yes; Sandy Cain, yes; Caleb Cavileer, yes; Betty Howell, yes; Frank Phillips, yes; Keith Bennett, yes

Motion to open to the public – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

All were in favor.

Motion to close the public – Councilwoman Howell – second – Councilman Cavileer

All were in favor.

Motion for final reading and adoption – Councilman Phillips – second – Councilman Cavileer

ROLL CALL: Butch Burroughs, yes; Sandy Cain, yes; Caleb Cavileer, yes; Betty Howell, yes; Frank Phillips, yes; Keith Bennett, yes

02 Establishing salary ranges for the City of Absecon.

Motion for second reading – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilman Burroughs

ROLL CALL: Butch Burroughs, yes; Sandy Cain, yes; Caleb Cavileer, yes; Betty Howell, yes; Frank Phillips, yes; Keith Bennett, yes

Motion to open to the public – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

All were in favor.

Frank – asked if it changed from last year?

Jessica – some of them did, but mostly were due to the police contract and some of the others got updated for the appropriate salary ranges for this year. She only changes the ones that are needed.

Motion to close the public – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilman Burroughs

All were in favor.

Motion for final reading and adoption – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

ROLL CALL: Butch Burroughs, yes; Sandy Cain, yes; Caleb Cavileer, yes; Betty Howell, yes; Frank Phillips, no; Keith Bennett, yes

Keith – asked that Resolution #49 be pulled from the Consent Agenda for separate discussion

Councilman Phillips made the motion – Councilwoman Howell seconded it.

All were in favor.

2020 RESOLUTIONS

43 Authorizing assignment of lien.

Jessica – explained that someone else wanted to buy the lien from the City and then the taxes would be paid.

44 Authorizing a refund of an overpayment of taxes on the property located at 29 Ables Run Drive (Block 258.01, Lot 1.110)

45 Accepting a Volunteer Firefighter into the Absecon City Fire Department, namely Joseph LaRotonda.

46 Appointing a Full-Time Dispatcher, namely Danielle Howey.

47 Authorizing Change Order No. 2 (Final-Supplemental) for Central Business District Streetscape Improvements – Phase III.

Eddie – this is the project on Mechanic, School and Church Streets. We did a final in December and between then and now there was some extra work needed to be done, but even with this added work, the contract still came in under the contracted amount. This will finalize it out.

48 Authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with Atlantic County and the City of Absecon for Pedestrian Safety Improvements along Pitney Road (CR 634).

Eddie – we have been waiting for some outside funding to go to this project and the County agreed to put in \$75,000 towards sidewalks on Pitney Road. The County is happy with the plans and this work will take place during the summer when school is out.

49 Authorizing the introduction of the 2020 Municipal Budget. **PULLED FROM CONSENT**

PUBLIC PORTION (for consent agenda items only)

Motion to open to the public – Councilman Burroughs – second – Councilwoman Cain
All were in favor.

Roger Dutch – 315 Pennsylvania Avenue – he travels Pitney Road a lot and he also feels the turn at Pitney Road should be wider. He'd also like to see the new jet come to our area.

Frank – he explained why he voted no on Ord. 2. He was not at the meeting where it was discussed and he was not in favor of all the raises. He has no problems with giving raises or the work performance, but numbers were mentioned and final amounts given, but he feels in the administrator's position, being a part time, we increased it by a substantial amount and that he was not in agreement with it. That's a piece of the reason.

Keith – compared to other towns, we're getting a bargain. We didn't need to pay an attorney for the contract negotiations.

Frank – he says it's not personal and gave some history when the position of the Administrator was changed. She does a lot of good work and we knew the work that was going to be involved. In the business he was in, the amounts in the contract are a big jump.

Motion to close public – Councilwoman Cain – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolutions 43 to 48 were read again.

Motion to move Consent Agenda – Councilwoman – second – Councilman Burroughs

ROLL CALL: Burroughs, yes; Cain, yes; Cavileer, yes; Howell, yes; Phillips, yes; Bennett, yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST - \$752,114.18

Motion to approve – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

ROLL CALL: Burroughs, yes; Cain, yes; Cavileer, yes; Howell, yes; Phillips, yes; Bennett, yes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 2/20/2020

Budget Meeting Minutes – 2/13/2020

Closed Session as to form and content only – 2/13/2020

Motion to approve – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

ROLL CALL: Burroughs, yes on 2/13 & abstain on 2/20; Cain, yes; Cavileer, yes; Howell, yes; Phillips, yes for 2/13 abstain on 2/20; Bennett, yes

REPORTS

Eddie – gave a firehouse update and said everything is moving along on schedule. They have progress meetings every Monday.

Sandy – asked who pays if the firefighters come and say they want something changed?

Eddie – it's normal for field changes to be done and they are covered.

He's received many phone calls about roads being marked out over town and that is because the gas company is coming in with an expansive project throughout the City. Locations are still being finalized. Old gas mains will be replaced at over 1,000 properties and once it begins we will be involved with coordination with the gas company. He will be reviewing the train ordinance and will report back.

Caleb – is Spruce still getting done? And what about the four way stop on Morton?

Eddie – it will get paved in the spring and the signage will be done once the paving is done.

Roger Dutch – who does the follow up after the gas company leaves and they've torn up the roads. The patchwork settles and they don't come back. Wyoming and Oakhurst have many potholes and patching isn't working.

Eddie – we do have an ordinance saying you can't tear up a road for 5 years, but if there is an emergency they have to do it. We check the streets in town twice a year and send them a list and they're supposed to fix them. As to the potholes, that's a State road and you can see they paved it curb to curb. We can take a look at it and possibly put it on a future list.

49 Authorizing the introduction of the 2020 Municipal Budget

Keith – the 2020 budget will be \$10,898,925.00. This includes an increase of 1.7 cents, which equates to about \$34 on a home valued at \$200,000. The increase is based on the growth of Public Safety items: police, dispatch, police pension and decreases in revenue. No part is attributed to the firehouse construction and any bill paid out now is being paid out from the purchase price of the old firehouse. Additional fund balance is being used to balance the budget using \$200,000 more than last year, leaving about 10% of the budget. Additional expenses are being reallocated to the sewer budget, which has grown due to new residences in town. The value of taxable property in town has increased over \$2,000,000.00 from 2019. There are less vacant homes and many foreclosures have been renovated. Currently 36 homes are listed for sale in Absecon, compared to 130 or so at this time of year. Anticipated revenues have gone down because of the less foreclosed homes. The capital program this year will include 3 new police cars, new radios, a license plate reader, the balance of the road program to complete Bayview Drive along with the grant money we received and finishing the retaining wall at City Hall, and most of it was put in last year's budget for repair. We also need to finish the sidewalk project on Pitney Road. He mentioned projects and what our money has been spent on over the five years in town. A small increase this year will help keep our

rate lower than where we were seven years ago. Corbin City is the only other town in Atlantic County that hasn't had an increase in seven years. The school district receives additional state aid each year and has increased taxes 20.5 cents over the last 6 years and there has been zero increase in municipal aid over the past 17 years, but the school aid has increased each year for the past 3 years. The 20.5 cent increase by the school equates to an increase of \$410 on a house valued at \$200,000 over the past 6 years. The city's portion is minus 4 cents over the past 7 years, which is a savings of \$80.00 on your taxes for a home valued at \$200,000. With a 1.7 cent tax increase in the budget this year, we are still at minus 2.3 cents since 2013 and that equates to \$46 less than what it was in 2013 for the city's share of taxes. All of our employees do a phenomenal job and sometimes they take on jobs that we have consolidated. We should be proud of them. He thanked Jessica for working on this budget and apologized to all, but we can't stay at zero forever.

Frank – recommended to everyone tonight and the residents, to attend the school board meeting next Tuesday, March 10 at 7:00 p.m.

Betty – at the budget meeting she was against raising any taxes, and she sees good things happening in Absecon and doesn't want residents to get discouraged regarding their taxes. You have to remember we can only control the city share and not the school and county. The raise was going to be at 2 cents, but it was able to be lowered to 1.7 cents.

Sandy – no one likes their taxes to go up, but maybe we should have over the last few years even a half a cent or something, but luckily we are able to keep it under 2 cents this year.

Motion to open meeting to the public – Councilwoman Howell – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

Motion to close public – Councilwoman Howell – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

Motion to approve Res. #49 – Councilwoman Cain – second – Councilman Burroughs
ROLL CALL: Burroughs, yes; Cain, yes; Cavileer, yes; Howell, yes; Phillips, no; Bennett, yes

REPORTS

Jessica – the budget adoption will not happen until the first meeting in April; 28 days after introduction. The spread sheet she gave everyone will be the one that goes to the State.

Mayor – thanked resident Michael Reilly for his email to her after the fire on 4th Avenue two weeks ago. He saw his neighbor's house on fire and immediately called 911 and ran across the street to get them out and stated that Chief Talley and Joe Marrone who live in the neighborhood responded immediately. They were able to get the owners out safely and the police officers were right behind them. With the quick response from everyone, the house was able to be saved, although there was extensive damage. Our emergency services did a great job and Michael stated in his letter that it's good to know they are there in the time of need and that they are often overlooked and deserve recognition for their service to our community.

She thanked Jessica for working on our budget. It's not an easy task. There are wants and there are needs and everything has a price tag. It's a balancing act trying to maintain our services our residents expect while always keeping in mind the costs. None of the expenditures are taken lightly. She thanked everyone for the tough decisions. She reminded everyone about the time change and to replace the batteries in the smoke detectors. Tomorrow is employee appreciation day and she thanked everyone for servicing our community.

Keith – he heard about the fire as well and he thanked everyone for the quick response, because there could have been loss of life. It should be commended.

PUBLIC PORTION

Motion to open to the public – Councilwoman Howell – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

Deb Reilly – 444 Fourth St. – she is Mike's wife and when the fire started, he was taking his mother's laundry back to him and he disappeared. When he told me what happened, she couldn't tell you how grateful she was that he was there. He will be happy that you mentioned him tonight and she thanked Kim for it.

Frank – we received the resolution regarding the second amendment protection and it was given to the Public Safety committee to review. At the same time, the County passed one, so our attorney is reviewing both and will advise us as to what to do. Hopefully by next meeting we can present something.

Betty – she was at the Field of Dreams today and they are installed swings for handicapped children in wheel chairs.

Roy Talley, Fire Chief – 100 Howlett Lane – thanked everyone for the nice comments on the fire. We had the police, EMS, Bayview Fire Dept. and Pleasantville as well and it worked out very well. He thanked Mike Reilly who spotted the fire and assisted us at the scene. The fire started on the outside and its cedar siding, so it took off. Our guys did a fantastic job. Everyone needs to check their smoke detectors. The fire department does provide a service to help with fire detectors and also c.o. detectors. If anyone uses oxygen, they should not have open flames in the home. If you do smell gas, please call it in. Don't wait.

Roger Dutch – 315 Pennsylvania Ave. – he understands the separate budgets, but didn't realize the City has no say over the school budget. He agrees that they ask too much.

Motion to close public – Councilman Phillips – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

Sandy – announced some upcoming events in the area. The March Senior Center schedule will be going on our website.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn – Councilman Phillips – second – Councilman Cavileer
All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 3-19-2020